

NEWS RELEASE

Department of the Navy

Environmental Public Affairs Office

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For Immediate Release

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SAN DIEGO -- (JUNE 6, 2001) -- During recent environmental investigations at Hunters Point Naval Shipyard sandblast grit was discovered during an excavation. Based on potential hazards unique to Hunters Point, the Navy's contractor followed prudent health and safety procedures and stopped excavation activities in the area.

The sandblast grit was observed in areas 7-4 and 7-5 of installation restoration site 7 (IR-07) in Parcel B of the Shipyard. The grit, observed during excavation of these areas, was found at a depth of 1.5 feet below ground surface and is several inches thick. Field analysis of the sandblast grit detected minimal radioactivity levels. Further laboratory analysis detected naturally occurring radium in the grit material.

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PARCEL B SANDBLAST GRIT -2-2-2

Sandblast grit is used worldwide for cleaning of surfaces. There are different types of abrasive materials that can be used for sandblasting. The most common sandblast grit used in military and industrial shipyards is made from coal slag and natural mined sands. Both contain low-levels of naturally occurring radioactive elements such as thorium and radium.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) visited the site on Tuesday June 5, 2001, to assess the potential health significance of this naturally occurring radioactivity in the sandblast grit. U.S. EPA radiological experts performed an independent evaluation of the site and confirmed that direct readings of the sandblast grit exhibited radiation levels only slightly above the naturally occurring soil background levels at Hunter's Point. They also visited areas where excavated soils were stored prior to discovering the sandblast grit. U.S. EPA did not detect radiation levels above background in this soil. U.S. EPA concluded that there was no health or safety concern from the sandblast grit in Parcel B based on the minimal levels of radioactivity detected.

Richard Mach, Department of the Navy Environmental Coordinator for Hunters Point, stated that "In 1999, sandblast grit was found in the same area, however, radiation was not detected above background levels and the material was transported to an appropriate landfill for disposal". Further laboratory analysis of the Parcel B sandblast grit and excavated soils is underway. These analyses will be used to confirm the field instrument readings and determine the appropriate disposal method for the material from the site. Contractor activities will not resume until Navy and regulatory agencies agree on the appropriate procedures to complete the cleanup activities for these areas. The area is fenced off and is not publicly accessible.

